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Tweeted Out: Management Tools to Prevent Social Media from Monopolizing Your Time

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Tweeted Out

Management tools to prevent social media from monopolizing your time

By Ashley Ames Ahlbrand

Anyone in charge of monitoring social media accounts for their workplace can attest to what a time-consuming task this can be. Although managing social media seems quick and easy—a simple browse of a newsfeed, a quick 140-character message now and then—monitoring more than one type of social media, or even using one platform diligently, can easily consume a large chunk of one's day. This is due in large part to the rapidly changing format that social media boasts; rather than dealing with a static webpage, the content in any social media platform is constantly changing, and, if you are not watching it 24/7, you are bound to miss something. This article will highlight several prominent social media management tools that can help you stay on top of your library's social media accounts without becoming overwhelmed.

What are the advantages of social media management tools? As can be expected, each tool discussed here comes with its own particular features, but common features of social media

management tools include the ability to schedule posts in advance; the ability to auto-schedule posts, allowing the social media management tool to choose the best time to post in order to reach the broadest audience; and the ability to monitor and post to multiple platforms and/or multiple accounts within the same platform all at once. Here are some of the more prevalent social media management tools.

Hootsuite

Hootsuite (www.hootsuite.com) is arguably one of the most popular social media management tools, allowing you to schedule posts in advance and providing an auto-schedule feature to help you post at the optimal time of day. In addition, it offers an easy view of multiple social media accounts, accessible from individual tabs within the same window. The tabs allow you to navigate between social media accounts without

having to go to multiple websites. Further, if you have multiple accounts within one platform—for instance, several Twitter accounts for your organization—you can create tabs for each of those accounts so that you can avoid having to continually log in and out of Twitter to update each account.

Further, within one tab on Hootsuite, you can create several “streams” of content, allowing you to organize the activity in any social media platform. For instance, if you have created a Twitter list to group the Twitter accounts at your institution, Hootsuite allows you to see tweets from those accounts alone as a separate stream, viewable alongside your general Twitter feed; this can help you avoid missing important tweets from those accounts. You might also create a stream that shows your tweets that have been retweeted or any mentions that your account has received from other Twitter accounts, which can help you measure your social media impact.

I use Hootsuite to manage my library's Twitter account (@IUMaurer LawLib), and I have been very satisfied with it. By creating streams based on law school Twitter accounts, legal research-focused Twitter accounts, and our retweeted tweets and mentions, I am able to effortlessly keep tabs on the Twitter

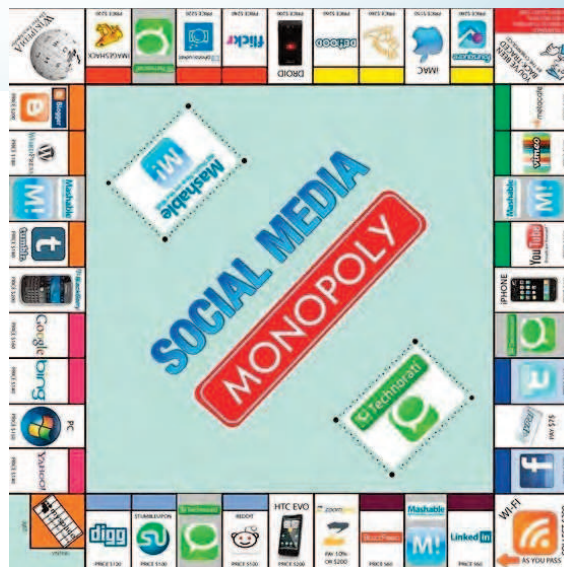


Image courtesy of Crystal Gibson.



www.hootsuite.com

activity most important to us. I can also use this tool to send messages out to both our Twitter and Facebook accounts simultaneously; I have found that our followers differ greatly between these two platforms (more students on Facebook, more professionals on Twitter), so Hootsuite helps us reach a broader audience with ease. This came in handy earlier this semester when we encountered a power outage on the weekend, and we needed to get out the message that the library was closing early. No power meant no email, but my colleague on duty was able to text me the message so that I could pass it along via Hootsuite. Could we catch everyone this way? No—but it was definitely a convenient start.

Social Media Integration: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Foursquare, Google+, WordPress, and mixi; the App Directory allows you to integrate even more content from other digital sources, from Gmail to YouTube, for varying monthly fees.

App: Available for iPhone, iPad, and Android devices (free)

Cost: There are three available

(tweetdeck.twitter.com) allows you to monitor and manage multiple Twitter feeds, schedule tweets in advance, and create alerts about new tweets. What's more, you can create multiple lists and streams to follow based on specific searches, hashtags, or accounts; similar to Hootsuite, you can arrange these as side-by-side columns for easier monitoring. TweetDeck even gives you the option to "mute" specific users or terms to avoid the noise that is so often associated with Twitter feeds. This tool also offers you customization options to change the appearance of your account, such as changing the traditional white background to a black background, to suit your aesthetic. Because it is owned by Twitter, you do not have to create a separate account to use TweetDeck—just sign up with your Twitter handle.

Social Media Integration: It's gone through the ringer, but, as of May 2013, TweetDeck is back to supporting Twitter exclusively.

App: No longer available—just web/desktop platforms

Cost: Free



tweetdeck.twitter.com

Hootsuite plans: the Free plan allows you to add up to five social profiles; the Pro plan starts at \$9.99 per month, with up to 100 social profiles, more advanced analytics, and the ability to add team members to your social management strategy; and the Enterprise plan (price varies) allows you unlimited social profiles, up to 500,000 team members, and a score of other advanced features, such as a dedicated account representative.

TweetDeck

Owned by Twitter, TweetDeck

Buffer

Like the other management tools discussed in this article, the major feature of Buffer (bufferapp.com) is the ability to draft posts in advance, keeping your social media accounts active all day without requiring your constant attention. Its analytics include tracking your top posts and your visibility potential to help you maximize your social media impact. Finally, Buffer emphasizes its compatibility with several popular content aggregating apps, such as Feedly and Pocket, allowing you to

easily post content found through these services to your social media accounts.

Social Media Integration: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google, App.net

App: Available for iPhone and Android

Cost: The free plan is one account for each social media profile; or upgrade to the "Awesome" plan for \$10 per month. There are also business and agency plans that range from \$50 to \$250 per month.

Postling

Postling (www.postling.com) offers many of the same features we have already seen—scheduling posts in advance, monitoring specific feeds, an integrated inbox for all of your social media contact, analytics, etc.—but it also offers some enhancements, including daily morning emails of your recent social media activity, email alerts of social media interaction, and the ability to connect multiple users to share social media management responsibilities. Postling also offers the widest array of social media interaction across a variety of social media and blogging platforms. In addition, Postling was recently purchased by LocalVox, and with that came added tools to help manage your social reputation, such as consultation on how to boost your Facebook following.

Social Media Integration:

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Wordpress, Blogger, Typepad, Tumblr, Squarespace, Drupal, YouTube, Flickr, Bitly, Yelp, and CitySearch

App: The website claims to have an app for the iPhone, but I was unable to locate it.

Cost: 30-day trial for \$1; \$10 per month for up to five social media accounts; an additional \$3 per month for each additional social media account

SocialOomph

Another productivity booster, SocialOomph (www.socialoomph.com) works with a variety of social media platforms. In addition to being able to schedule tweets in advance, SocialOomph allows you to save drafts of tweets to use or reuse later, purge your account to start fresh without losing your network of followers and accounts you follow, and "self-destruct" your earlier tweets to eliminate confusion with old information. However, the free account allows you only Twitter management—on up to five Twitter accounts. For Facebook and LinkedIn management, you must pay for the Professional package. For many of the enhancements, such as the "self-destructing" (time-limited) and recurring updates for Facebook and Twitter, the professional account is also required. SocialOomph is the only tool featured in this article that

allows you to interact not only with Facebook business pages and feeds but also with Facebook Groups.

Social Media Integration: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Plurk, App.net, RSS feeds

App: No

Cost: Limited free account; full Professional account is \$17.97 every two weeks; the Twitter unlimited account is \$6.97 every two weeks.

Tweepi

A Twitter management tool, Tweepi (tweepi.com) is slightly different than the other tools discussed in this article. The tool is focused on cleaning up your Twitter account, and it offers several ways to do so. For instance, the Flush tool allows you to ferret out those you follow but who are not following you; the Cleanup tool helps you to clear your account of any spammers or inactive users you have been following; and Force Unfollow allows you to force other Twitter accounts, such as spammers, to unfollow your account. It also has a Reciprocate tool that will make your account automatically follow any account that starts following yours. Finally, Tweepi offers enhanced profiles of Twitter accounts, including information such as the account's Klout score, to help you determine the social media influence of Twitter accounts you are considering following.

Social Media Integration: Twitter

App: No

Cost: There is a free plan and two premium plans with added features: the Silver plan is \$7.49 per month, and the Platinum plan is \$14.99 per month.

If This Then That (IFTTT)

Finally, for something even more different, IFTTT (ifttt.com) is a program that allows you to create an endless number of "recipes" that trigger certain events to happen if other designated events occur. For instance, a simple recipe might be, "If I post to Twitter, post it also on Facebook." But it could also be "If I take a picture on Instagram, add it to my Dropbox photos." You can create your own recipes using the channels available in IFTTT, and there are a large number of shared recipes to get you started. With the variety of channels available, from social media to cloud storage to blogging platforms and more, IFTTT has endless possibilities for helping you manage your social media, as well as keeping you organized in other aspects of your work and personal life.

In many ways this service goes far beyond the other social media management tools discussed in this article, but it all depends on what you are looking for in a service like this. If you just want to be able to minimize the time it takes to post across multiple platforms

or upload social media photos to your cloud storage, this might be the right tool for you. But if you also want to be able to see your lists of Twitter accounts side by side in a more organized fashion or enjoy the benefit of a service that can schedule your posts for optimal times of the day, IFTTT is not the tool for you.

Social Media Integration: 75 different "channels" covering the various social media, cloud storage, blogging platforms, and more

App: For iPhone and iPad

Cost: Free

Other Tools for Social Media Management

When most people think of social media management tools, they are thinking of the types of tools listed above—tools for scheduling posts across multiple platforms, etc. However, there are a couple of other types of social media management tools that you might also find useful for performing other services with your social media accounts.

Social Media Analytics

In addition to tools that help you manage your social media activity, there are tools designed to analyze your social media impact. Rather than publication tools, these are assessment tools to help you measure the impact of your social media presence. You should note that most of the tools already discussed in this article provide analytics features as well, but the analytics in the following tools are much more robust and customizable, providing the means to assess your overall social footprint, the impact of a specific social media platform, and even benchmarking tools to see how your organization measures up to peer institutions. These tools are designed for businesses, so you will find that most do not have a free account, and the packages they offer tend to be considerably more expensive than the social media management tools discussed earlier. These tools offer very similar analytics, so are not discussed at length, but any distinguishing features are mentioned.

- **Twtrland** (twtrland.com): In addition to the option of logging in to the Twtrland website, this tool has partnered with Hootsuite, so Hootsuite users can add the Twtrland app from the Hootsuite app dashboard and access Twtrland analytics about any Twitter account by looking it up by its handle.
- **SocialBakers Analytics** (socialbakers.com)
- **Simply Measured** (simplymeasured.com)
- **Social Report** (www.socialreport.com): In addition to helping you track your level of social media activity and engagement, Social Report gives you detailed demographics on your social network followers and offers "social

backup" to help you archive social media content.

- **SumAll** (sumall.com)
- **Google Analytics** (www.google.com/analytics): We are all familiar enough with Google Analytics to know that it is about much more than social media, but one aspect of the Google Analytics package is Social Analytics to measure the impact of social media on your organization.

Social Media-Based Publications

Finally, a common complaint about social media is that it is impossible to keep up with because the content is constantly changing; you would have to watch your Twitter feed 24/7 to not miss a thing. To address this concern, there are several tools today that will comb your social networks and provide a report to you of the most important stories of the day from those you follow. The most popular of these tools include **Paper.li** (paper.li) and **TweetedTimes** (tweetedtimes.com). Although these tools do not report every story that travels through your social media each day, they do an excellent job of sifting through the noise to highlight those stories of most importance, either because they have been recirculated by several accounts or have received high ratings of popularity from social media users. Both of these services allow you to tailor your social media report by focusing on specific accounts, hashtags, or searches. You also have the ability to allow others to "subscribe" to your social media newspaper so that they too can receive a weeded version of the day's social media activity.

A Welcome Addition

As social media continues to grow, keeping up has become increasingly time-consuming. Finding tools to mitigate this strain, therefore, can be a real lifesaver. As we have seen, plenty of tools exist to address this problem; the key is figuring out what you want the tool to accomplish and what social media you want it to address. Once you have those questions answered, I think you will find that social media management tools are a welcome addition to your daily work routine, freeing up considerable time to get back to the rest of your workload while keeping your organization's social media presence active and engaged. ■



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